

# FRONTIERS

News about BLM's National System of Public Lands in Alaska • Issue 117 • Summer 2013 • [www.blm.gov/ak](http://www.blm.gov/ak)

BLM

## FIND YOUR ADVENTURE



Alaska



Delta River: Photo by Jeremy Matlock



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**Back Cover**  
Bringing the Arctic Alive



Humans aren't the only ones that enjoy taking a splash down the Delta Wild and Scenic River. Bet the caribou feel refreshed!

## Welcome to Frontiers

We are very happy to bring *FRONTIERS* back with its 117th issue. While we focus on recreation this time, you will find this issue has a lot of information and news after a year's hiatus.

With this issue, are resuming our normal schedule of three to four issues a year. You can look forward to *FRONTIERS'* features, photos, news, calendar items, and tips for enjoying these public lands in Alaska. Despite the long delay, we've been pleased at the continued interest, requests for subscriptions and print copies, and comments on *FRONTIERS* from our readers. You, our readers, are why we do this. As always, while out on public lands be safety conscious, research your destinations, and respect what you find and leave for others to enjoy. We hope you enjoy this issue of BLM-Alaska *FRONTIERS*.

Karen J. Laubenstein  
Managing Editor

@BLMAlaska

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# calendar

- July**

**18 Bering Sea-Western Interior RMP Scoping**  
150-day public scoping period begins for the BSWI RMP. [www.blm.gov/ak/planning](http://www.blm.gov/ak/planning)

**25 Arctic Visions & Voices movie premiere**  
At Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot, Dalton Highway milepost 175. Reception begins at 7 p.m., screening at 8 p.m. (see back page).

**August**

**1 Youth Hike to Liberty Falls in Chitina, Alaska**  
Ages 10 & up. Sign up with WISE 907-822-3575

**3 National Public Lands Day in Chitina, Alaska**  
Volunteer Clean-up 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Register at the Chitina Wayside at 9 a.m.

**7 Arctic Visions & Voices movie premiere**  
At the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center, 101 Dunkel St. in Fairbanks. Reception begins at 7 p.m., screening at 8 p.m. (see back page).

**8 Tangle Lakes Blueberry Picking Youth Hike**  
Sign up with WISE 907-822-3575

**14 Mushroom Fair!**  
Have fun learning about fungi from local mushroom enthusiasts at the Campbell Creek Science Center at 7 p.m. [www.blm.gov/ak/sciencecenter](http://www.blm.gov/ak/sciencecenter)

**22 Iditarod National Historic Trail State Fair Exhibit**  
Drop by the exhibit at the 2013 Alaska State Fair in Palmer (Aug 22-Sept 2) to learn about the unique history of America's Last Great Gold Rush Trail.

**September**

**11 Water Discovery Days**  
1,000 fourth graders will be coming to Campbell Tract Sept 11-13 to have a day of water science activities!

**28 National Public Lands Day in Anchorage**  
Volunteer stewardship projects 9 a.m.-12 p.m. Register at Campbell Creek Science Center at 8:30 a.m. Volunteer luncheon and center open house to follow. [www.blm.gov/ak/sciencecenter](http://www.blm.gov/ak/sciencecenter)



# EXPERIENCING THE BEST OF ALASKA: THE DELTA RIVER

A TRAVELOGUE BY MARNIE GRAHAM

The rich environment of the Delta River corridor and watershed covers an area of about 150,000 acres and contains a network of 160 miles of streams and 21 lakes. The Delta River flows north through the Alaska Range and joins the Tanana River, which joins the Yukon River. The elevations average about 2,800 feet at the Tangle Lakes, then the drainage falls 650 feet in 51 river miles. Vegetation ranges from arctic tundra to spruce-poplar forests, with varied and abundant plants such as fireweed, bistort, rose, mountain avens, burnet, and shrubby cinquefoil. There are abundant wild blueberries, crowberries, alpine bearberry, cranberry, and red currant. In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act designated the upper stretch of the Delta River, all of the Tangle Lakes, and the Tangle River as part of the National Wild and Scenic River System.

Few places in Alaska captivate me and keep pulling me back like the lands and waters of the Delta Wild and Scenic River corridor in the Alaska Range of southcentral Alaska. Every adventure here is vastly different; every adventure is a treasure. Nothing is as appealing as hunting for the perfect wild berry patch with my family, dropping a line to a hungry iridescent grayling fish, or experiencing the camaraderie around a crackling campfire from my camp chair. Here is where I watch the sun dip behind the magnificent Alaska Range or can slip unnoticed in my canoe between a grazing moose and a fishing loon. When I'm in the Delta Wild and Scenic River corridor, I frequently find myself overwhelmed with sincere gratitude, a heartfelt wonder just to be in this place.

The Delta River flows north. This is why the "Upper and Lower" Delta names can be confusing. Your innate sense is that the river must be flowing in the opposite direction. The Upper Delta is south of the Denali Highway. It is actually a chain of lakes higher in elevation that form the headwaters of the Delta River. The Tangle River drains the Upper Delta, flowing north through and connecting the lakes, past the BLM's Delta Wayside, under the Denali Highway, past the Tangle Lakes Campground, and then joins Round Tangle Lakes and the "Lower Delta" River or the northern main.

I love the Upper Delta area, which some folks refer to as the Upper Tangles or Upper Tangle Lakes (adding to the confusion), for its wide-open views. It's a wonderful place for birding, gathering, and fall hunting. A short canoe trip and portage from the BLM's Delta Wayside can give you a feel for the area, but to truly experience the magic, you should canoe and camp along the adjoining shallow lakes for several days. It is here that many parents have brought their children to experience.

## Delta Wayside and Tangle Lakes Campground

The BLM's Delta Wayside and Tangle Lakes Campground are situated just off the Denali Highway near Mile 21 in the recreational portion of the Delta, and only about a mile after the paved portion of the Denali Highway from Paxson ends. The Wayside is a day-use area where you can often find grayling fishers and day picnickers. The Wayside has drinking water and a restroom — a welcome commodity for those traveling long distances — fishing the Tangle River or Upper Tangle Lake, or when preparing for an excursion. River fishing can be off the banks or wading into the cold flowing waters using insulated hip boots or waders. The Wayside also serves as overnight parking for boaters traveling into the Upper Delta.

Across the road from the Wayside and near the Tangle River bridge is the entrance to the recently renovated Tangle Lakes Campground. Many campers adopt this campground as their perfect Alaskan destination, their "Ahh-laska," and they base their Denali Highway and Delta River adventures from here. Spectacular and age-old views of the Alaska Range and the Tangle Lakes create a stunning panorama before you. The air resonates with the calls of arctic warblers, flitting from bush to bush, briefly displaying their tiny chartreuse bodies before again hiding in the thickets. While you watch folks and loons out on the lake in search of the perfect catch, you can warm yourself by your campfire in provided fire pits, with firewood available for sale from the volunteer campground host. Children ride bikes around the gravel roads on the campground, and steady winds can be great for kite-flying. For an after-dinner stretch of the legs, a wonderful new foot trail skirts the campground. This trail leads gradually upward to

an outstanding 360-degree view of an unparalleled landscape. Apply caution, folks have gone this route and immediately fallen in love with all they saw around them. I know, I'm one of them.

## Window to the Ice Age

If you need an additional hook and intrigue to visit these BLM National Conservation Lands, here is a window to the past. A portion of the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District (TLAD) lies within the Delta River Corridor. Referred to as the "T-Lad," this area is a nationally designated historic district and recognized for its importance in understanding the human occupation of Alaska (and potentially North America) since the last great Ice Age at the end of the Pleistocene! Located between Mileposts 17 and 37 of the Denali Highway, TLAD has more than 600 archaeological sites, with artifacts from pit-houses to hand-fashioned stone tools. Carbon dating tests have helped identify four different cultural traditions: 1. Denali Complex (about 10,000 to 7,000 years ago); 2. Northern Archaic Tradition (about 7,000 to 1,000 years ago); 3. Athapaskan Tradition (about 1,000 to 200 years ago); and 4. Historical Period (Russian and European-American).

Glancing around, you can easily imagine a far distant time when receding glaciers formed the area. You can almost see the caribou and the people hunting them, who gradually came to occupy the exposed landscape in the path of the glacier's retreat.

As you gaze, you notice lattices on the hills and steppes in all directions with caribou migration paths, the paths are separated by waist-high wild blueberry bushes that stand firm against the steady breeze that bathes your face. The paths, the blueberries, and a steady supply of chert

—continued on page 6



Jeremy Matlock

From the Delta Wayside, you can paddle through the Upper Tangle Lakes, connected by a series of portages. The Tangle River flows past them all back to the Delta Wayside, making a superb loop trip for canoeists.



Craig McCaa

Families and friends enjoying an evening stroll out of the BLM Tangle Lakes Campground. The recently renovated campground located at MP 21.5 of the Denali Highway. Tangle Ridge Hiking Trail has outstanding views of the Tangle Lakes and Alaska Range. Forty-five camping spots are available for a \$12 per night fee.

Jeremy Matlock



(microcrystalline rock), provide the perfect recipe for hunters and gatherers through the ages and leads to this point in time and to you. We can't look at this scene without awe, reverence, and a primordial sense of history and humanity. After all, our visit adds to the evidence that people have occupied this area for at least the last 10,000 years.

## Delta Wild and Scenic River

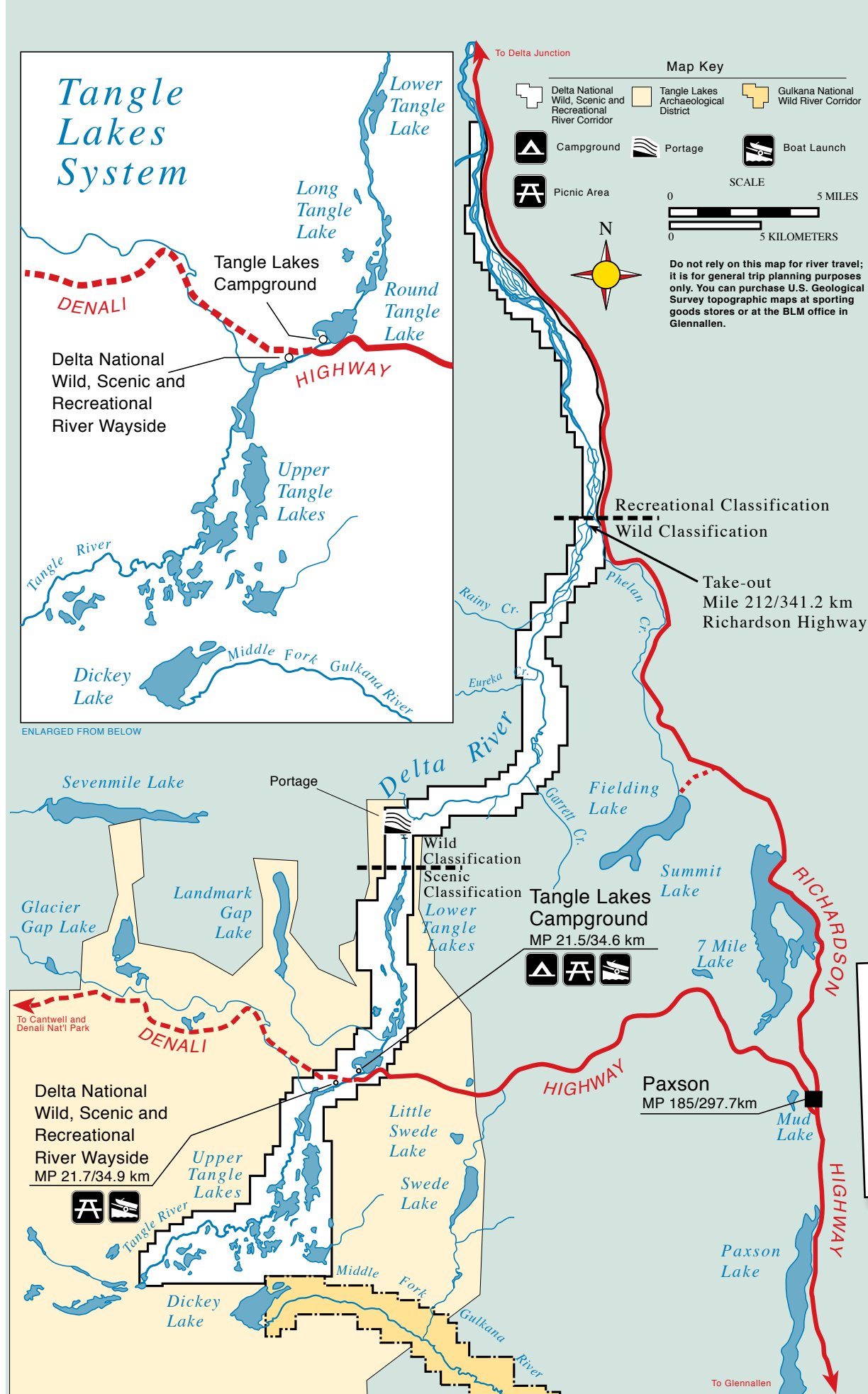
For a rewarding and secluded adventure, plan to explore the Delta Wild and Scenic River Corridor by water on a two- or three-day canoe trip through Round Tangle Lake and into the Delta River, beginning at the Tangle Lake campground boat launch. The river running season generally begins in June, depending on winter break-up and precipitation (average is 11 inches of rain, 120 inches of snow). On this excursion, you will need to negotiate a maintained trail to make a mandatory portage for less than half a mile around a narrow series of waterfalls on the river, which is why canoes or kayaks make a better choice than most rafts for this journey. After the falls, there is a two-mile stretch of Class III river. You may see tremendous views of Mount Hayes to the west. Mount Hayes, at 13,832 feet at the head of Hayes Glacier, is the highest mountain in the eastern Alaska Range and is one of the tallest peaks in the United States.

The river route offers a variety of water challenges, from Class 1 meandering water to Eureka Creek, then fast glacial water to the takeout seven miles below Eureka Creek. Epic headwinds blow upriver all through here, and it is important to bring enough materials to keep camping gear tied down and anchored. Those winds do mostly keep the mosquitoes away.

This trip is one I love. Misty, early morning fogs dissipates exposing canyon, tundra-covered hills, heavily forested areas, and the snow-capped mountains of the Alaska Range. Wildlife is plentiful, especially in early mornings, and you may see moose, bear, Dall sheep, beaver, fox, lynx, wolf, marten, wolverine, otter, muskrat, or mink. Birds are plentiful and you may glimpse eagles, hawks, owls, ptarmigan, waterfowl, and more of the 110 identified bird species that are mostly summer residents. As you canoe through the remote, primitive and secluded stretches of the river known for its arctic grayling fishing, you'll watch the waters turn from a clear and pristine aquamarine, to a murky gray from glacial silt. This is the last leg of the trip before you take out at Mile 212 of the Richardson Highway, below Phelan Creek and opposite Ann Creek.

For those in rafts or expert paddlers, you may want to continue beyond Ann Creek and the Mile 212 takeout on the Richardson Highway to ride a 17-mile stretch of fast, cold glacial river, including the two-mile stretch of the Black Rapids. These are Class IV rapids with six-foot waves and huge holes to miss, and not for the novice. This stretch passes Miller and Castner creeks, then an Trans-Alaska Pipeline pump station. For these rapids, you would need to portage canoes down to the next river access point at Mile 229 of the Richardson Highway. From Mile 229, there are 30 miles of Class III rapids, followed by 18 miles of Classes I and II rapids to the confluence with the Tanana River near the town of Delta. The river is braided in this area and will keep you guessing which way to go. ■

—Marnie Graham is a public affairs specialist in BLM-Alaska's Glennallen Field Office.



Jeremy Matlock

Caribou can be seen migrating through the Delta Wild and Scenic River Corridor each spring and fall.

Paddlers circumvent the Delta River Falls by crossing the small pond that connects the two Delta River portage trails.



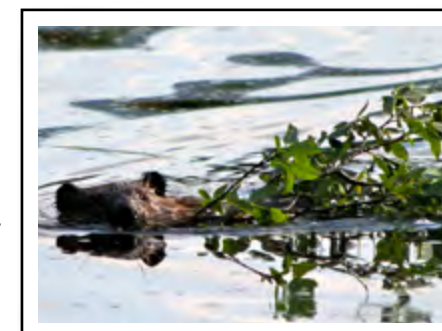
Jeremy Matlock



Jeremy Matlock

Migrating trumpeter swans return to the lush summer habitat of the Delta River.

Mile after river mile, beavers are seen swimming along the banks of the Delta, busily building their homes.



Jeremy Matlock





## SURVIVAL IN A VEHICLE

Staying in a vehicle during a wildland fire is dangerous and should only be done in an emergency. You can survive the firestorm if you stay in your car. It is much less dangerous than trying to run from a fire on foot.

Drive slowly with headlights on, windows up and closed air vents. Watch for other vehicles and pedestrians. Do not drive through heavy smoke.

If you have to stop, park away from the heaviest trees and brush. Turn headlights on and ignition off. Roll up windows and close air vents.

Get on the floor and cover up with a blanket or coat. Stay in the vehicle until the main fire passes.

Stay in the vehicle. Engine may stall and not restart. Air currents may rock the car. Some smoke and sparks may enter the vehicle. Temperature inside will increase. Do not run! Metal gas tanks and containers rarely explode.

After a wildfire, Avoid damaged or fallen power lines, poles and downed wires.



## IF TRAPPED IN A BUILDING (CABIN, HOME, ETC.)

When trapped by wildfire inside a building, stay inside and away from outside walls. Close doors, but leave them unlocked. Keep everyone together and remain calm. If you have pets, keep them in one room.

If you have time, gather fire tools such as a rake, axe, handsaw or chainsaw, bucket and shovel. Connect garden hoses to outside water faucets and fill any large containers such as garbage cans, sinks, etc., you can with water.

Close outside attic, eaves and basement vents, windows, doors, pet doors, etc. Remove flammable drapes and curtains. Close all shutters, blinds or heavy non-combustible window coverings to reduce radiant heat. Close all inside doors to prevent draft, and any outside doors, including to the garage. Open the damper on a fireplace, but close the fireplace screen.

Shut off any natural gas, propane, or fuel oil supplies at the source.

Place a ladder against the house in clear view.

Put valuable papers, mementos, and pets inside the car, ready for quick departure if it becomes possible.

Move flammable furniture to the center of the residence, away from the windows and doors.

Turn on outside lights and leave a light on in every room to make the house more visible in heavy smoke.

Check the roof immediately after the fire danger has passed. Put out any roof fires, sparks, or embers. Check an attic or loft for hidden burning embers.

For several hours after the fire, maintain a "fire watch." Re-check for smoke and sparks throughout the house. Use caution when entering burned areas as hazards may still exist, including hot spots, which can flare up without warning.



## IF CAUGHT IN THE OPEN

The best temporary shelter is in a sparse fuel area. On a steep mountainside, the back side is safer. Avoid canyons, natural "chimneys" and saddles.

If a road is nearby, lie face down along the road cut or in the ditch on the uphill side. Cover yourself with anything that will shield you from the fire's heat.

If hiking in the back country, seek a depression with sparse fuel. Clear fuel away from the area while the fire is approaching, wet debris down to minimize breathing dust particles, and then lie face down in the depression and cover yourself. Stay down until after the fire passes!

Remain calm. Pace yourself. You may find yourself in the position of taking charge of other people. Listen carefully to what people are telling you, and deal patiently with urgent situations first.

If you or someone is burned or suffering from smoke inhalation, call 9-1-1 or seek help immediately; cool and cover burns to reduce chance of further injury or infection.

Discard any food that has been exposed to heat, smoke or soot. Do NOT use water you think may be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice, or make baby formula.

Large-scale wildfires dramatically alter the terrain and ground conditions and increases the risk of flooding or mudslides. Normally, vegetation absorbs rainfall, reducing runoff. However, wildland fires leave the ground charred, barren, and unable to absorb water, creating ripe conditions for flash floods and mudflow. It may take the vegetation up to five years to grow back and return to normal conditions after a wildfire.

# WILDLAND FIRES IN ALASKA BE AWARE, BE PREPARED!

BY MEL SLATER

The snows have finally gone and the welcoming warm temperatures have arrived in Alaska. As you plan your recreational activity, be ready for the unknown. During summers in Alaska, that means planning for wildfire season.

As you enjoy recreation, wildlife, travel, and scenery anywhere on public lands, be aware and prepared for wildland fire danger. Fire, by nature, is an unpredictable and often uncontrollable force.

In Alaska, the summer wildland fire season normally runs from May through September. In 2012, a relatively quiet and wet year for wildland fires, there were 416 wildland fires across the state, burning over 286,000 acres. In 2009 for comparison, 520 Alaska wildland fires burned 2.9 million acres statewide.

Lightning causes many fires in Alaska. Lightning-sparked fires tend to be larger fires because they occur in the larger forested areas of the state. Human-caused fires are more frequent. Fire prevention awareness by visitors to public lands is critical to your safety and the safety of others and property. We know wildfires often begin unnoticed, and spread quickly, igniting brush and trees. If it's predictable, it's preventable!

## When recreating in Alaska:

- Identify water sources where you are.
- Have sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves, and a handkerchief.
- Bring a Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Tell someone where you are going and expect to be back.

BLM-managed public lands provide an excellent opportunity to get out and explore Alaska, enjoy different activities, and have fun with family and friends. Wildland fire awareness and preparation help ensure a fun and safe adventure. For more information on wildland fire visit the BLM Alaska Fire Service online at <http://fire.ak.blm.gov/afs>.

—Mel Slater is a public affairs specialist for BLM Alaska Fire Service.



## Lightning-caused Fires

Be aware of lightning-caused fires when in areas with high tree and brush concentration. Trees and other vegetation dry rapidly when temperatures rise along with high winds. These are ideal conditions for fire when lightning strikes occur.

Check the daily wildland fire weather information online at the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center or AICC website <http://fire.ak.blm.gov> to see where danger lies.



## Human-caused Fires

Human-caused fires start through accidents or negligence. These fires accounted for 273 fires in 2012 in Alaska. High temperatures, dry fuels, and strong winds all contribute to fire starts. The catalyst for those fires are often from routine daily activities: power tool sparks, downed power lines, children at play, debris burning, campfires or cookouts, and vehicle incidents. Other human-caused fires start through carelessness: use of fireworks in unauthorized areas, smoking, improper use of barbecue grills or fire pits, not properly extinguishing campfires or letting them burn out of control, or burning debris in wooded areas.

We can prevent a large number of fires simply by following some guidelines when on public lands:

- Know the fire weather situation and how it affects your activities. Consult with public land personnel. Check the AICC website. Notice the "fire danger" sign ratings. If it is medium or higher, take special precautions.
- Locate campfires or barbecue grills in places where fire cannot spread.
- Use a fire pit or fire pan.
- Keep an ample amount of water nearby to extinguish flames.
- Don't leave a campfire or barbecue grill unattended.
- Dispose of lit smoking materials appropriately.
- Do not discharge fireworks, they usually are illegal on public lands.
- Extinguish campfires completely and double-check for any heat before leaving the site: water, stir, touch.
- Before burning debris in a wooded area, notify local authorities and obtain a burning permit (if required in that area). Have a fire extinguisher or garden hose on hand when burning.
- Alert authorities if you see smoke or suspect a wildland fire.



# LAST YEAR IN REVIEW

Frontiers may have been on hiatus in 2012, but activity on BLM public lands in Alaska was at full tilt! Here's a recap in pictures of some of the things BLM staff accomplished in 2012. Many are also featured on our website [www.blm.gov/ak/features](http://www.blm.gov/ak/features).

In March, film crew and BLM staff chased blowing gear and endured -50 degree windchill at Finger Mountain on the Dalton Highway while shooting the BLM film *Arctic Vision & Voices*.



Tim Craig

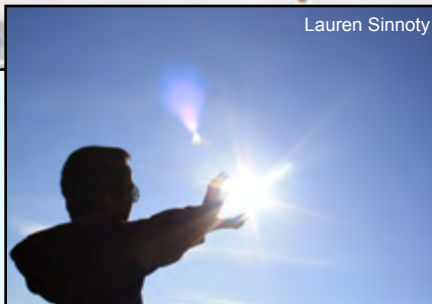
One of the major planning accomplishments was the release of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska IAP/EIS.

Karen Laubenstein



**DAN SEAVEY'S  
IDITAROD TRAIL  
CENTENNIAL TEAM**

Lauren Sinnoty



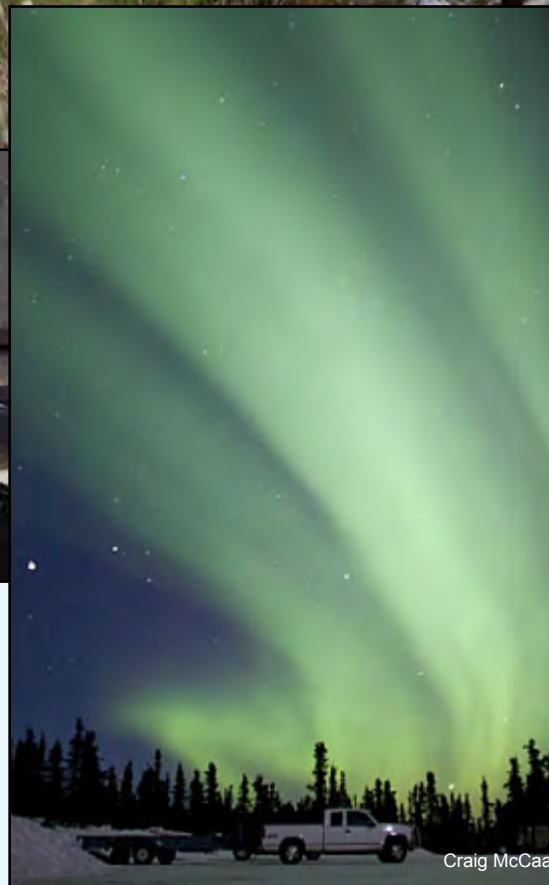
In June, BLM's Arctic Interagency Visitor Center reached out to Iñupiat youth from Anaktuvuk Pass, Alaska by hosting them for a week-long visitor services experience. Youths enjoyed the midnight sun.



BLM-Alaska enlists "star power" from Ice Road Truckers for their 2012 National Public Lands Day event in August in Coldfoot, Alaska and created a video for YouTube!



WISE kids catching bugs with the guidance of BLM staff during the Youth Aquatic Camp in July. The camp is designed to teach Copper River Valley youth river ecology, aquatic entomology, hydrology, water quality, fish biology/behavior/anatomy, role of riparian areas, boating skills, and water safety.



Craig McCaa

With a peak in the solar cycle, 2012 was a year of phenomenal photos of the aurora borealis. The White Mountains National Recreation Area's Wickersham Dome is a popular viewing spot. (Photo taken February, 2012)

The White Mountains 100 race through the White Mountains National Recreation Area in March is on every extreme mountain bikers' bucket list!



Craig McCaa

National Public Lands Day in Anchorage was a one of a kind in September 2012 because of the freak snow storm that hit! Several inches fell making it perfect for a snowman volunteer model to be constructed. By mid morning the snow began to melt, making projects easier to accomplish.



Robert King



Jeff Brune



Matthew Vos

To help celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Homesteading Act, BLM invited Alaskan Homesteaders to a 4th of July event on the parkstrip in Anchorage, Alaska.

No task is too great for the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center staff and their young volunteers. During National Trails Day in June, more than 60 volunteers turned out to help take care of the Campbell Tract.



# “THE BEACON SHINES AND THE LEGEND GROWS” TWO ALASKANS RECEIVE NATIONAL AWARDS

By Karen Laubenstein



Lisa Shon Jodwalis (second from left) receives the Beacon Award.

Bill Overbaugh, BLM-Alaska Outdoor Recreation Planner, expressed it well. “The Beacon shines and the Legend grows,” he writes, after learning that two of this year’s six winners of American Recreation Coalition’s prestigious annual awards handed out June 3 and 4 during Great Outdoors America Week went to BLM-Alaska employees. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell was part of the awards ceremony and met individually with the winners for photos.

Beacon award-winner Lisa Shon Jodwalis simply could not believe it, and said so, writing an email to all BLM-Alaska employees. “I’m pretty stunned,” she confessed. Lisa is a Park Ranger with the BLM-Alaska Central Yukon Field Office, and her Beacon award recognizes the innovative use of technology in visitor services and management. She led the creation of a 30-minute high-definition film, *Arctic Visions & Voices: a Journey into Northern Alaska*, which focused on the 414-mile Dalton Highway. Viewers can see what it’s really like on this remote and challenging road, which many have only come to know through the popular History Channel television series on ice road truckers, through the *Arctic Visions & Voices* film. Lisa credited everyone involved in her project, from the Contracting Officer and Field Manager, to other agencies and members of her working group. “As I see it,” she writes, “this award is for BLM and its partners. It was a team effort all the way.”

For more than 18 years, Outdoor Recreation Planner Marcia Butorac from the BLM-Alaska Glennallen Field Office has planned, prepared, and

conducted outdoor recreation field season operations. A few years ago, she transitioned to facility management of these resources and expanding her duties to include the field office and its associated facilities. It can take Marcia an entire day just to travel the length of these lands, not including stops to work on projects. Still, she has managed to mentor dozens of seasonal youth hires and campground host volunteers and successfully meet the growing demands of the recreating public. She has trained and provided staff and volunteers with comprehensive recreation management experiences so they can deliver quality recreation opportunities along these rivers, trails, campgrounds, and way-sides.

Marcia was responsible for upgrading campgrounds to national standard fee sites. In 2012, when the Tangle Lakes campground project completed, recreation revenue for the Glennallen Field Office nearly doubled.

All of this and more is why Marcia received the 2013 Legends Award. This award recognizes outstanding federal employees who increase recreation opportunities and participation on public lands. Yes, she has certainly done that!

Bud Cribley, BLM-Alaska State Director, said “Members of our BLM-Alaska team have once again been recognized at the national level for the incredible work that they do. I am proud to work with these dedicated BLM employees and offer my congratulations on both well-deserved awards from the American Recreation Coalition.”



Interior Secretary Sally Jewell congratulates Marcia Butorac on receiving the American Recreation Coalition Legends Award.

# MANAGING LANDSCAPES: BLM-ALASKA RAPID ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS

By Scott Guyer

BLM-Alaska is working to understand the current and future conditions of landscapes across Alaska by conducting Rapid Ecological Assessments (REA). REAs are part of the BLM’s nationwide effort to manage changing landscapes effectively in the future. REAs are “rapid” assessments because they involve synthesizing existing information, rather than conducting new research or collecting new data. REAs are usually done in 24 months, half the time it usually takes to complete a BLM land-use plan.

REAs help managers identify and answer important management questions, document key resource values and focus on significant habitats and species of concern. Led by an assessment management team of federal and state managers and technical specialists, the assessment identifies effects caused by climate change, wildland fire, invasive species, and development. It identifies opportunities for resource conservation, restoration, and development; science gaps and data needs; and helps develop a baseline to evaluate and guide future management actions. The assessment provides science-based information and tools to consider when resource planning and making land-use decisions.

Each REA has a pre-assessment and assessment phase. In Alaska, the Seward Peninsula REA is being completed this year. When a REA is completed, seminars will help inform field offices, partner agencies, and the public of assessment results. The Seward Peninsula REA includes three ecoregions: the Seward Peninsula, Nulato Hills and Kotzebue Sound Lowlands. Management issues considered looked at during the REA include native plant communities, aquatic resources, species, climate and permafrost, fire, invasive species, reindeer grazing, development, regional socioeconomics, and subsistence.

Scheduled for completion in 2014 are the Yukon Kuskokwim (Yukon Lowlands-Kuskokwim Mountains-Lime Hills) and in 2015, the North Slope (Beaufort Coastal Plains-Brooks Foothills-Brooks [Mountain] Range) REAs. Descriptions of the ecoregions, change agents, data (maps, models), memos and reports, are all available through the national BLM website:

<http://www.blm.gov/ak/reas>.

—Scott Guyer is a natural resource specialist for BLM Alaska State Office

North Slope Rapid Ecological Assessment Area



Seward Peninsula Rapid Ecological Assessment Area



Yukon Kuskokwim Rapid Ecological Assessment Area





## BLM-Alaska Associate State Director: Ted Murphy



"Every day," Ted says, "I am inspired by the tenacity and energy of BLM-Alaska employees." Ted became Associate State Director for BLM-Alaska in August 2012.

Ted arrived in Alaska in 2007. Over the next 5 years, he led the Renewable, Energy & Minerals, and Planning groups for BLM-Alaska. He focused on policy development and procedures throughout the diverse cultural and natural resources within the State.

Following his selection as BLM-Alaska's Associate State Director, Ted is working to build upon the energy and cohesiveness of the Alaska organization. "As public stewards," Ted points out, "we have a huge responsibility to our publics. Working every day within the Alaska organization makes me proud, knowing that through our Alaska workforce, we are adding value to these public lands that we have this opportunity to manage."

Before coming to the Far North in 2007, Ted was the Solid Minerals Division Chief in the BLM's Washington Office. There, he helped implement the solid minerals portions of the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

He gained field experience at the Rock Springs Field Office in Wyoming. His federal career began with a job for the U.S. Geological Survey as a mining engineer after graduating from Montana Tech.

## Chief, Office of Communications: Erin Curtis

Imagine moving to Anchorage during one of the longest winters on record for the Anchorage area, after living in Sacramento! Erin Curtis is glad to see Alaska's summer and nearly endless daylight. At the California State Office, Erin had a major role in coordinating communications for the high

profile renewable energy program there. She also spent time as a public affairs specialist in BLM's Grand Junction Field Office in Colorado.

Erin is bringing a strong expertise in communications from both inside and outside of the federal government to her new role in Alaska. She has more than 15 years working in public relations and publications management, and more than 7 years of supervisory experience.

Erin holds a master's degree in Public Administration from California State University, Long Beach, and a bachelor's degree in Government/Journalism from California State University, Sacramento.

# MEET BLM-ALASKA'S NEWEST LEADERS

## Anchorage District Manager: Karen Kelleher

Karen joined BLM-Alaska in January 2012. As Anchorage District Manager, she now oversees 22 million acres of BLM-administered lands and resources in the southern half of Alaska. She looks forward to exploring the state and working with our many partners, local communities, Alaska Native groups, and other constituents.

Karen moved to Alaska from Wenatchee, WA, where she was the Wenatchee Field Manager from 2008-2012. Prior to her time in Washington, she worked in the Phoenix District as the Sonoran Desert National Monument Manager and Lower Sonoran Field Office Planner. She began her career with the federal government in 1999, working for two years in D.C. at the Department of the Interior policy office and the BLM planning division.



## Anchorage Field Manager: Alan Bittner

Anchorage Field Manager Alan Bittner joined the BLM-Alaska team in December 2012. Alan moved to Alaska from Nevada, where he served as Assistant Field Manager in Carson City for four years. He oversaw the environmental education, forestry, range, recreation, wildlife and wild horse and burro programs, and developed successful internal and external partnerships. Prior to his time in Nevada, he worked for over 15 years with the U.S. Forest Service and the BLM in Idaho.

As Manager of the Anchorage Field Office, Alan now oversees 17 million acres of BLM-administered lands and resources in western, south-central, and southeast Alaska. Under Alan's leadership, the field office will develop a land use plan for the Bering Sea-Western Interior region that balances the needs of local communities with future development in the planning area, and focuses on sustaining rather than restoring the lands and resources of the region. "I look forward to working on issues in the vast landscape of Alaska. Our Bering Sea-Western Interior RMP is a unique opportunity to affect the management of large intact landscapes versus the fragmentation we experience in the Lower 48."

Alan holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Cornerstone University of Michigan. He enjoys getting outdoors with his wife Monique and their two boys.



## Deputy State Director, Division of Resources: Steve Cohn

BLM-Alaska's new Deputy State Director for Resources, Steve Cohn, just arrived in Alaska on May 30. He was Division Chief of the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) in the BLM Washington office. Steve has been with the BLM since 2001, when he started as a Presidential Management Fellow in the NLCS national office. He also served in field assignments for BLM in Arizona and Oregon/Washington, including as Field Manager in Arizona's Hassayampa Field Office.

Steve will oversee the planning, renewable resources and energy and minerals branches. He will be responsible for projects including land use planning decisions, recreation and resource development, oil and gas development, and environmental cleanup projects on public lands.

Steve has a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a Doctorate in Wildland Resource Science from the University of California at Berkeley. He was a Fulbright Scholar to Canada, where he researched First Nation Land Claims Treaties and resource issues in the Yukon Territories. He also won the prestigious 2012 Secretary of the Interior's Partners in Conservation Award and the BLM Director's Diversity Award in 2011.



## National Conservation System State Program Lead: Brandi Bradford

Brandi Bradford has a lot of energy. When talking about her work with BLM-Alaska, she explains, "My whole career and varied experiences have been building to this wonderful opportunity! This is my dream job in this dream location [Alaska]." Brandi is the National Landscape Conservation System lead. She'll quickly rattle off that Alaska is home to one national conservation area, one national historic trail, and six wild and scenic rivers. Brandi's responsibilities also include serving as program lead for BLM-Alaska's Youth, Volunteers, Partnerships, Interpretation, and Education. She first worked for the BLM in 1993 as a college intern for the BLM-Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Planner. She spent the next 20 years learning her craft as a Park Ranger, Interpreter, Education Specialist, Outdoor Recreation Planner, and Program Manager in positions from Hawaii to Washington, D.C. "I'm so excited to be back with BLM!"



## Deputy State Director, Division of Support Services: Leslie Holland

Leslie Holland became Deputy State Director for BLM-Alaska's Division of Support Services in January 2012. She's relatively new to federal service and the BLM. She came to the BLM from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Alaska Science Center, where she was Administrative Officer.

After hearing Leslie's soft Southern drawl, it's no surprise to learn that she managed support services contracts at the USGS's National Wetlands Research Center in Louisiana before moving to Alaska. A New Orleans native, Leslie likes to share her favorite Cajun dishes with her fellow workers at every opportunity. Anyone up for some Gumbo or Mardi Gras King Cake?

Leslie finds it very refreshing that the BLM is eager to allow employees to try their hand at a variety of work that is new or different from their regular jobs through detail, acting, and special task force/team opportunities. She says, "It gives our employees an opportunity to walk in someone else's shoes and gain a broader perspective of how each of our jobs are interconnected. In the process, the BLM gains a much more informed and engaged workforce! It's definitely a win-win."

Holland holds a bachelor's degree from the University of New Orleans with a major in communications. She is active in her church community. Alaska seems a good fit, for when Leslie can get away, she loves to go fishing.

## Deputy State Director of Lands and Cadastral Survey: Ron Dunton

As a cost savings and efficiency measure the Divisions of Alaska Land Transfer, Cadastral Survey, and the Office of Pipeline Monitoring merged into the Division of Lands and Cadastral Survey. Ron was reassigned to lead this "mega division" and still serves as the Authorized Officer too for the pipeline office, which is now referred to as the Branch of Pipeline Monitoring. Ron describes his new work as a "challenge in an interagency setup to work with partners in multiple jurisdictions. We learn to see the other agencies' viewpoints."

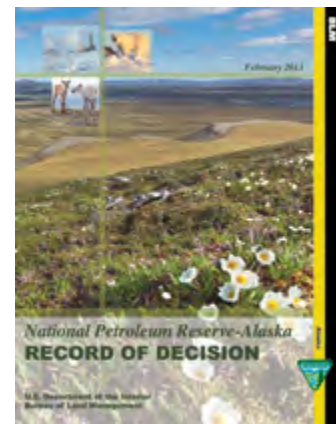




## National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska Oil and Gas Lease Sale scheduled for November 2013

The BLM call for nominations and comments for the 2013 NPR-A oil and gas lease sale closed July 18. The lease sale is scheduled for November 2013 and will be the third sale since President Obama directed the Department of the Interior to conduct annual oil and gas lease sales in the NPR-A. The call for nominations and comments is the first step in the process leading up to the next oil and gas lease sale. To select which tracts will be available for the oil and gas lease sale, the BLM-Alaska State Director will consider the results from the Call for Nominations and Comments, existing natural resource and environmental data, the location of existing leases, multiple use conflicts, resource potential, industry interest, and other available information. There are 894 tracts on approximately 10.3 million acres that will be available for nomination and comment under this lease sale. Currently there are 191 authorized oil and gas leases totaling 1,534,626 acres in the NPR-A. You can find the news release about the 2013 oil and gas lease sale and a link to a map at: <http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/info/newsroom.html>

## National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska IAP/EIS Record of Decision released



The Secretary of the Interior signed the Record of Decision for this plan on Feb. 21, 2013. Key issues in the NPR-A plan include oil and gas leasing decisions, the protection of surface resources such as caribou, waterfowl, and their habitats near Teshekpuk Lake, habitat for the Western Arctic Caribou Herd in the Utukok River uplands in the southwestern NPR-A, and subsistence values. This is the first land-use management plan to cover the entire 22.8-million-acre reserve under the BLM's purview. Although

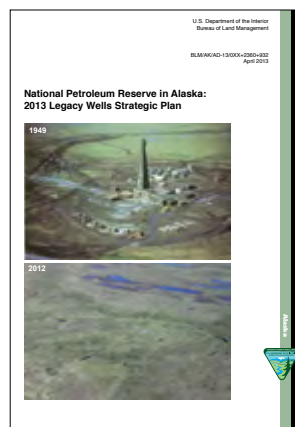
no production has yet occurred in the NPR-A, the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) May 2011 estimate includes 273 million barrels of undiscovered oil recoverable at an oil market price of \$72 per barrel or 500 million barrels at \$90 per barrel. The USGS assessment is 18 trillion cubic feet of undiscovered natural gas that is economically recoverable using an \$8 estimated market price per thousand cubic feet. You can find the Record of Decision document at [www.blm.gov/ak/planning](http://www.blm.gov/ak/planning)

## National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska Legacy Wells Program

In May, BLM-Alaska released a draft plan outlining priorities and actions it will take in the near-term to plug and clean up legacy wells in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. "We recognize the importance of cleaning up these well sites. This plan lays out an aggressive strategy to address some of the highest priority wells," said BLM Alaska State Director Bud Cribley. "Full remediation of the wells that the BLM has inherited will require tremendous resources

over the coming years, but the BLM is committed to working with the state and villages to get the job done."

The plan, titled the *2013 Legacy Wells Strategic Plan*, is based on a thorough site-by-site assessment of each well site. Of the 136 wells drilled between 1944 and 1982 by the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), more than half require no further action because they have been remediated or pose no threat to the public or the environment. An additional 18 wells are in use by the USGS as part of climate change monitoring in the Arctic. The remaining 50 wells will, according to assessments conducted by the BLM, require various levels of additional cleanup work. The strategic plan also identifies 16 priority wells for clean-up, including some that pose high risks to the surface. For example, three well sites on the Simpson Peninsula where solid waste was left behind by the U.S. Navy, including half barrels and other drums submerged in oil seeps, are identified as priority sites for clean-up. Find the Strategic Plan and Summary Reports are online at: [www.blm.gov/ak/legacywells](http://www.blm.gov/ak/legacywells)



## BLM-Alaska hosts exhibit booths at Great Alaska Sportsman Show in Anchorage and the Fairbanks Outdoor Show

On March 28-31, BLM-Alaska hosted its annual booth at one of America's most unusual trade shows for people who love the great outdoors. Held in Anchorage, the show draws sell-out crowds who care passionately about fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, climbing and virtually all other outdoor activities. About 20,000 admission tickets are sold annually. The BLM-Alaska booth has become a Sportsman Show favorite. This year's BLM exhibit featured invasive plants education and strategies. The Campbell Creek Science Center also had a booth with information about bear safety and organized a



This year's Anchorage booth exhibited invasive plants and animals in Alaska's waterways. Youth received a coloring page educating them on aquatic invasive species.

bear safety-based scavenger hunt for kids as part of their work with the interagency Anchorage Bear Committee. On April 19-21 at the Carlson Center, the Fairbanks District's exhibit booth joined the 180 vendors that showcase Alaska's outdoors, including hunting, fishing, camping, outdoor sports and activities, safety gear, all-terrain vehicles, boats, trailers, hunting and fishing guides, travel destinations, and firearms.

## BLM-Alaska Campbell Creek Science Center 39th Annual Outdoor Week for Sixth Graders



Jake Schlapfer teaches a group of sixth graders about boat safety, hypothermia symptoms, and the importance of wearing a proper life jacket at Outdoor Week.

This year's 39th annual Outdoor Week event brought 1,500 Anchorage-area sixth graders, 300 teachers/parent chaperones, and dozens of BLM-Alaska staff volunteers and also volunteers from four other federal agencies, two state agencies, five other organizations/business, and several individuals to the Campbell Tract over four days. The students rotated among five different educational stations on one of four woodland loops, learning about a variety of outdoor-related topics. All students participated in bear safety and gold panning. The other stations included archaeology, weather, Leave No Trace principles, insects, birding, dog mushing and the Iditarod National Historic Trail, fly fishing and tying, snow studies, water flow, animal adaptations, GPS, and boating safety. The Friends of the Campbell Creek Science Center received a \$3,000 grant from Anchorage's Municipal Light and Power to fund buses for underserved students to Outdoor Week.

## Water Discovery Days Wish Granted

The "America's Great Outdoors: Connecting Youth to the Outdoors" grant of \$10,063 is helping the Science Center fund its "Water Discovery Days" educational event in September 2013. This three-day outdoor education event in September will teach 1,000 Anchorage-area fourth graders about healthy watersheds, creek macroinvertebrates, and salmon while promoting stewardship of local waterways.



A fourth grader looks for aquatic macroinvertebrates in a sorting tray at Water Discovery Days in 2012.

## Alaska iTREC! (Iditarod Trail to Every Classroom) Teacher Training Workshops

Twelve teachers from a number of communities along the historic Iditarod Trail in Alaska completed three workshops for place-based, service learning training in Nome this past spring. This year was the third year of the popular Iditarod Trail to Every Classroom program, a partnership of the BLM, US Forest Service, Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, and other partners and modeled after the "A Forest for Every Classroom" and "A Trail to Every Classroom Along the Appalachian Trail" programs. iTREC! is a year-long, multi-disciplinary professional development series for educators aimed at providing the inspiration, knowledge and skills to transform classroom teaching into effective and exciting place-based service learning.



iTREC! graduating class of 2013 at the end of the trail in Nome, Alaska.

—continued on page 18



Project Healing Waters Partnership 2013



The BLM teamed up again this year with Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc. The organization is dedicated to the physical and emotional rehabilitation of disabled active military service personnel and disabled veterans through fly fishing and associated activities including education and outings. This year's event was at Tangle Lakes and the Delta Wild and Scenic River and had some amazing weather to go with the amazing fishing.

BLM-Alaska Fairbanks District hosts meeting on NASA Rockets

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is evaluating future management options for their Sounding Rockets Research Program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Poker Flat Research Range. To do this, they introduced a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed plan last fall. BLM-Alaska Fairbanks District Office hosted their public meeting on the plan with the other cooperating agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for the project. The Poker Flat research rockets are routinely launched over and retrieved from public lands, including BLM-Alaska's White Mountains National Recreation Area. The new plan will assist in permitting the landings and recovery of sounding rocket stages.



Alaska Fire Service smokejumpers help NASA by parachuting to remote areas of the North Slope to retrieve parts of research rockets, launched from the Poker Flat Research Range, about 30 miles north of Fairbanks.



Pam Eldridge

Invasive Plant Management Strategies

The Central Yukon Field Office has completed its Draft Dalton Management Area Invasive Plant Management Strategic Plan environmental assessment. The assessment analyzes potential impacts of invasive plant management strategies

along Alaska's Dalton Highway between the Yukon River Bridge and Galbraith Lake. The draft plan includes alternative invasive plant control strategies to pulling and digging, including herbicides. It also includes public education, monitoring, and an Early Detection Rapid Response program.

BLM-Alaska Patents over 700,000 Acres to State of Alaska

In April, BLM-Alaska issued a confirmatory patent to the State of Alaska for a whopping 729,000 acres of land along the Kuskokwim River, about 100 miles downriver of McGrath. The State of Alaska has received original or confirmatory patents for nearly 1.5 million acres over the past year. Just 5 million acres of the State's 105-million-acre total entitlement under the Statehood Act have yet to be conveyed. In addition to land transfers to the State of Alaska, BLM continues to convey land in fulfillment of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.



Kim Mincer

Deputy State Director of Lands and Cadastral Survey Ron Dunton points out areas of interest and land status of townships to State of Alaska officials.

Central Yukon Resource Management Plan

BLM-Alaska's Central Yukon Field Office is developing a Central Yukon Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. The Central Yukon planning area encompasses 59 million acres, including 16 million acres of BLM-managed public lands in north-central Alaska. This area includes the Dalton Highway Corridor, the Central Arctic Management Area Wilderness Study Area, the Central Yukon River, and scattered parcels west of Fairbanks. This effort will provide management direction for lands west of Fairbanks. It will revise the Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan from 1991, the original Central Yukon Resource Management Plan from 1986, and will replace portions of the Southwest Management Framework Plan from 1981.



Delta River Special Recreational Management Area Plan



Jeremy Matlock

In July 2013, the BLM released the approved plan for the Delta River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and East Alaska Resource Management Plan Amendment. This document will provide guidance for the recreational management of the Delta River SRMA for the next 15-20 years. The Approved Plan is designed to provide for a mix of river recreation uses and users, while managing to protect the environment and Outstandingly Remarkable Values.

Haines Planning Area amendment to the Ring of Fire Resource Management Plan

The BLM Anchorage Field Office released the Ring of Fire Draft Resource Management Plan for the Haines Planning Area in December 2012. The BLM held open house meetings in Haines and Skagway and received 34 comments regarding the Haines Planning Area Amendment.

The BLM is currently reviewing the comments and considering new information regarding mountain goat species in the Haines area and cultural concerns raised during tribal consultation. Visit [www.blm.gov/ak/planning](http://www.blm.gov/ak/planning) for future updates regarding the Haines planning effort.

The Haines Planning Area in Southeast Alaska includes approximately 320,000 acres of BLM-managed public lands located in two main blocks southwest of Haines and northwest of Skagway.



Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan Draft and Supplement Released

In 2012, the BLM released The Eastern Interior Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). When completed and approved, the RMP will provide future direction for 6.7 million acres of public land including the White Mountains National Recreation Area, the Steese National Conservation Area, and the Fortymile area. It will replace three existing land use plans and also cover BLM lands not currently included in an existing land use plan: the upper Black River area and scattered parcels along the highway system.

Last winter the BLM released a supplement to the Proposed RMP to analyze a range of alternatives and obtain public comment on hardrock mineral leasing in the White Mountains NRA. The supplement amends one of the alternatives to include a hardrock mineral leasing scenario. Under this scenario, approximately 160,000 acres of the nearly 1 million-acre White Mountains NRA would be available for hardrock mineral leasing. Both documents are available online at: <http://www.blm.gov/ak/planning>



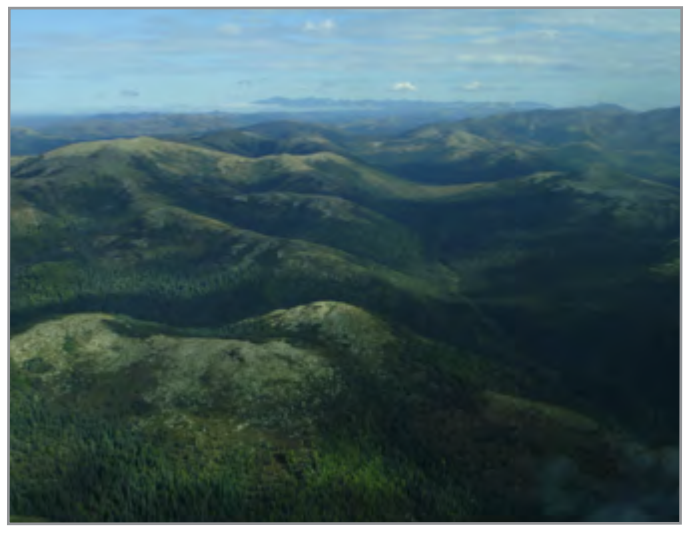
Lenore Hepler

Eastern Interior Draft RMP public meeting held in Fairbanks earlier this year.

Bering Sea/Western Interior (BSWI) Resource Management Plan

The Anchorage Field Office has announced the beginning of public scoping period for the Bering Sea-Western Interior (BSWI) Resource Management Plan. The BSWI planning area encompasses approximately 62 million acres of land including 10.6 million acres managed by the BLM. Key issues in the planning area include subsistence resource use, mineral development, Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) section 17(d)(1) land withdrawals, and the demand for local energy sources. The BLM will work with local communities and tribes to schedule formal scoping meetings and government-to-government consultations this fall. The public scoping period runs through December 16, 2013.

The BSWI planning area includes all lands south of the Central Yukon watershed to the southern boundary of the Kuskokwim River watershed, all lands west of Denali National Park and Preserve and the divide of the Alaska Range to the Bering Sea (including Saint Lawrence, Nunivak, and Saint Matthew islands). To view a map of the planning area, get more information, or be added to the BSWI mail list, visit [www.blm.gov/ak/planning/bswi](http://www.blm.gov/ak/planning/bswi).



Jeff Duhrsen

BSWI RMP lands between the towns of Holy Cross and Flat.



# BRINGING THE ARCTIC ALIVE

By LISA SHON JODWALIS

In 2005 when the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot won a prestigious award for exhibits from the National Association for Interpretation, one of the central pieces was missing – a film to help bring those exhibits to life. That film is now a reality.

The short version of *Arctic Visions & Voices: a Journey into Northern Alaska* premiered in the visitor center's last summer. The 15-minute film immerses viewers in the sights, sounds, and sensations of all four seasons in Alaska's arctic. In May 2013, the film received the Telly Bronze Award for Travel/Tourism.

*Arctic Visions & Voices: a Journey into Northern Alaska* helps people understand how extremes of climate and day length affects its inhabitants; and how people value the area land and its resources in different ways. The film offers a glimpse of the wonders, mysteries and challenges of this unique place, and instills a desire to explore further and more intimately – to touch the tundra, listen to the Lapland longspurs, and dip your toes in the Arctic Ocean.

Resource interpreters from the BLM Fairbanks District Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service developed the film's vision and themes. Residents of Wiseman provided an essential local perspective. The film was produced by Post Modern Company (formerly U.S. Media Services) in Denver.

The journey along the Dalton Highway from Interior Alaska to the North Slope and Coastal Plain is a long one, where travelers experience three major geographic and ecological regions. At the top of the world, the low angle of the sun creates oddly frozen ground and severely limits what can live and grow. Winter is the dominant season in the North, but the brief summer bursts with activity, both wild and human.

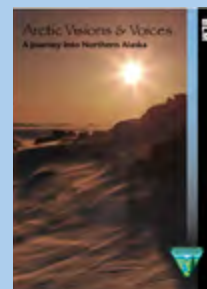


Lisa Shon Jodwalis

Director of Photography Rich Feldman takes footage of musk oxen.

This year, the full 34 min. version of the film will premiere at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center and in Fairbanks (See page 3). Both events are co-sponsored by the Alaska Geographic Association, BLM's non-profit partner.

Later this summer, the DVD of the film will be available for sale through the Alaska Geographic Association visitor center book stores and at [www.alaskageographic.org](http://www.alaskageographic.org).



Arctic Interagency Visitor Center • Coldfoot, Alaska • Dalton Highway milepost 175 • 907-678-5209 • Open 11 a.m.–10 p.m. daily.



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